

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

BARBARA DOSS, et al.,

Plaintiffs,

v.

COUNTY OF ALAMEDA, et al.,

Defendants.

Case No. 19-cv-07940-CRB

**ORDER REGARDING
AUTOMATIC STAY**

On November 15, 2024, Defendant Wellpath, Inc. filed a suggestion of bankruptcy and notice of stay (dkt. 148), in which Wellpath indicated that it had filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy in the Southern District of Texas. Pursuant to section 362 of the Bankruptcy Code, Judge Alfredo Pérez of the U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Texas entered an automatic stay of any proceedings against Wellpath. That stay applies here.

Then, on November 26, 2024, Defendant Guadalupe Garcia filed a suggestion of bankruptcy and notice of stay (dkt. 149) in which she raised the same stay order from Judge Pérez but asserted that it should operate as a stay of this case “in its entirety, including the plaintiffs’ claims against the non-Debtor defendants [i.e., Defendants other than Wellpath].” Garcia quotes the following language from Judge Pérez’s order: “The lawsuits are stayed in their entirety, including the plaintiffs’ claims against the Non-Debtor Defendants, on an interim basis pursuant to section 362 of the Bankruptcy Code.” Am. Interim Order Enforcing the Auto. Stay at 2, In re Wellpath Holdings, Inc., Case No. 24-90533 (ARP) (Bankr. S.D. Tex. Nov. 12, 2024), ECF 69. But Judge Pérez’s order makes clear that capitalized terms like “Non-Debtor Defendants” are defined terms of art that “have the meanings ascribed to them in” a motion filed in that case.” Id. at 1 n.1. That

1 motion defines “Non-Debtor Defendants” with yet more defined terms and more cross-
 2 references to other documents, so it is unclear whether it applies to Garcia. Mot. for Entry
 3 of Interim & Final Orders to Enforce the Auto. Stay or in the Altern. Extend the Auto. Stay
 4 to Non-Debtor Defs. at 2, Wellpath Holdings (Bankr. S.D. Tex. Nov. 12, 2024), ECF 17.¹

5 The Court will not wade through the morass of bankruptcy filings to determine
 6 whether Judge Pérez’s stay order applies to any defendants other than Wellpath in this
 7 litigation. That is unnecessary. The Court retains inherent authority “to enter a stay of an
 8 action before it, pending resolution of independent proceedings which bear upon the case.”
 9 Mediterranean Enters., Inc. v. Ssangyong Corp., 708 F.2d 1458, 1465 (9th Cir. 1983)
 10 (citation omitted). Many of Plaintiffs’ claims in this case arise from similar facts and
 11 similar legal arguments such that a partial stay would require the parties to relitigate the
 12 same issues once the bankruptcy stay is lifted. That would be inefficient for everyone
 13 involved. See J & J Sports Prods., Inc. v. Brar, No. 09-CV-3394-GEB-EFB, 2012 WL
 14 4755037, at *2 (E.D. Cal. Oct. 3, 2012); HML Holdings, LLC v. Romero, No. 21-CV-380-
 15 BAS-BLM, 2021 WL 4751168, at *2–3 (S.D. Cal. Oct. 12, 2021).

16 The Court therefore **STAYS** all proceedings in this matter pending resolution of
 17 Wellpath’s bankruptcy petition. Upon termination of the bankruptcy proceeding or an
 18 order granting relief from the automatic stay, the parties shall, within 14 days, file a status
 19 report in this matter.

20 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

21 Dated: December 3, 2024



22 CHARLES R. BREYER
 23 United States District Judge

24
 25 ¹ While defined terms may be useful shorthand while drafting, lawyers should take care
 26 not to overuse them, especially in proposed orders when finding the definitions requires
 27 cross-referencing to various briefs and declarations. After all, someone eventually needs
 28 to read and understand court orders—and lawyers’ briefs, for that matter. A complicated
 web of cross-references wastes courts’ and lawyers’ time (and clients’ money); it also
 increases, rather than decreases, the risk of misinterpretation. Cf. Richard A. Posner,
Goodbye to the Bluebook, 53 U. Chi. L. Rev. 1343, 1350 (1986) (criticizing overuse of
 cross-references that “make the reader spend his time flipping backwards and forwards”).